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# Drama

A MAGAZINE OF THE THEATRE  
AND ALLIED ARTS

V. 1, 1919, 2

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BY ALBERT RUTHERSTON, RANDOLPH  
SCHWABE, FRANK SWINNERTON, Etc.

LONDON CHATTO & WINDUS

# DRAMA

*is Edited by* GEOFFREY WHITWORTH  
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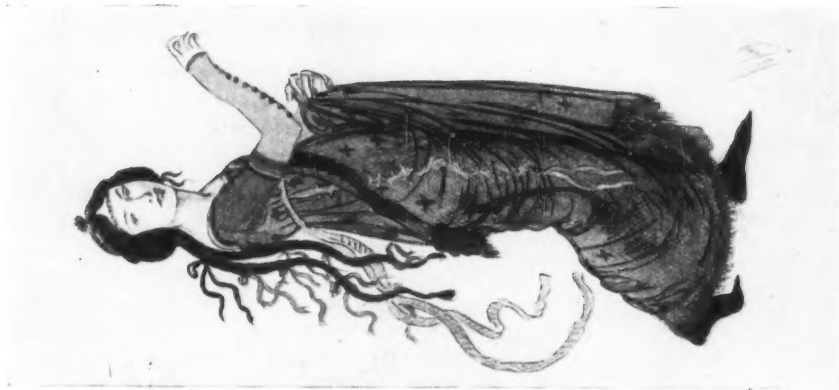
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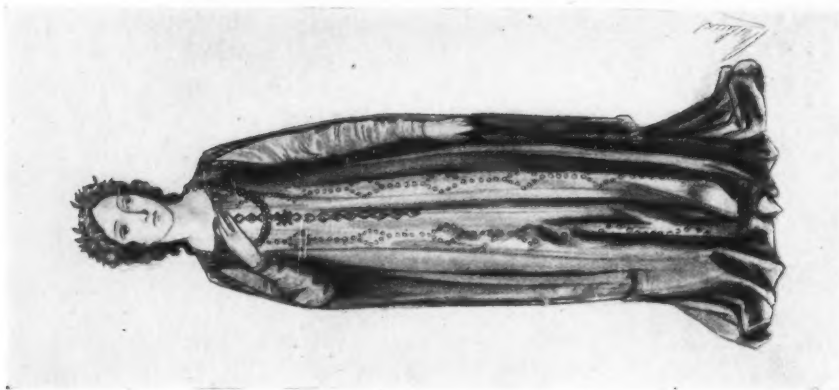
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" 27th—Revelations on Morality, Miracle and Mystery Plays, and Seasonal Festivals (I.)  
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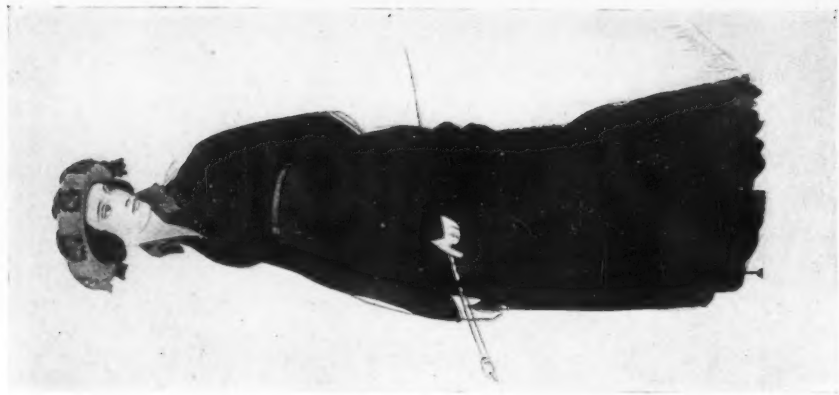




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A Montague Lady, Act I., Sc. I.

DESIGNS FOR ROMEO AND JULIET, AS PRODUCED BY MISS DORIS KEANE AT THE LYRIC THEATRE

BY SANDRA L. BULLOCK

# D R A M A

Volume I

OCTOBER M·CM·XIX

Number 2

## The Stratford Conference

THE Theatre Conference at Stratford was, we believe, the first occasion in history when a representative gathering of Theatrical Societies, of professional actors, managers, producers, scene-designers, educationists, social workers, members of the general public have gathered together for free discussion of problems which confront the Theatre in its artistic and social reactions. It is clear that no formula could be found to do justice to contributions made to the discussions from so many sources and so many points of view. It is, however, possible to trace certain main trends of feeling which manifested themselves during the Conference, and these were fairly crystallised in the resolutions which were passed, after brief discussion and by unanimous vote, at the penultimate meeting of the Conference on Thursday afternoon, August 27.

Resolved: I. That this Conference urges the importance of establishing—

(1) A National Theatre policy adequate to the needs of the people.

(2) A faculty of the Theatre at the Universities of the country, with the necessary colleges.

II. That this Conference pledges itself to promote and help forward collective and individual efforts for the development of the art of acting, the drama, and of the theatre, as forces in the life of the nation.

These resolutions have not escaped, of course, the usual objections that they are "good resolutions" only. In the present instance, however, it must be remembered that in the Drama League there does exist an organisation which may have the power to carry them, or some of them, to fruition; and although they must not be regarded as in any sense official resolutions of the British Drama League, it is certain that the League will give them its most careful consideration.

On its lighter side the Conference will surely be remembered by the hundred and fifty or more people who took part in it as among their most happy experiences. At the meetings themselves instruction was nicely blended with amusement, and the evenings and afternoons spent at the Memorial Theatre added incalculably to everyone's profit and enjoyment. Mr. Bridges Adams and his company have already had their share of honour, and for our part we thank them most heartily for contributing so much, though perhaps so unwittingly, to the success of our Conference.

For the rest, Stratford was—Stratford. Not another place in England could have afforded such a perfect setting for our deliberations. No wonder that everyone seemed happy there. No wonder that, on the whole, the debates were conducted with such serene good temper. Altogether it was a wonderful fortnight—a fortnight during which many friendships were made, and none, we trust, broken.



# THE CASE FOR A NATIONAL THEATRE

By Martin Harvey

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN\*—It was with a good deal of reluctance that I yielded to the very flattering request of some of your committee to address you. I doubted when the request was made, as I doubt now, whether my views will be of much service to this Conference. I doubt it the more when I glance down the list of the various societies and associations which are co-operating in this Conference and realise that I know very little of the aims of many of them. This is not due, I beg you to believe, to an indifference to any means which may benefit my calling, but because the keeping afloat of my own little barque absorbs almost all my time. Those who invited me to address this meeting spoke of my "unrivalled experience," and if by that term they mean the concentration I have had to exercise in keeping that barque above water, then I bow to their conviction that perhaps my views may be of some slight service. So there are two things which I shall try to keep steadily before me—concentration and the truth. And the greatest of these is the truth. Let me take the truth first.

It seems to be generally admitted that the drama is in a parlous condition. As far as London is concerned, it is. We need not worry about the country at large. There the taste of the people for the best and the greatest is as healthy as ever it was. In London, however, circumstances have combined to produce a deplorable state of things. What are these circumstances? First the war. The great majority of the vast number of men on leave from the war in London very naturally, as I think, turned to the lighter forms of entertainment. He would be only a prig who would blame a man, home for a few days from the appalling strain and privation of the trenches, for indulging in the frothy joys of bright music, sparkling light, and the warmth of delicate femininity. Who can wonder that the purveyors of this sort of thing waxed fat, that they overflowed from one theatre to another, till

most of the places of entertainment fell into their hands.

The second circumstance, I believe, is the fact that from various causes the actor-manager, as we have learnt to apply the term, had almost ceased to exist. Retirement, absence, illness, or death have so thinned their ranks that they could oppose no united or considerable front to the oncoming attack of sheer frivolity.

These two circumstances are contributory causes to the present condition of the drama in London, and *combined* are a deep misfortune. But the war is over, and the excuse for mere frivolity no longer exists. There is a deeper cause still—the taste of the average theatre-goer. This, I fear, in London from generation to generation does not vary much. Contemporary comment on the stage of any period has generally lamented the low level to which the drama has fallen in its day. Giants we have had in abundance, Shakespeare who could not resist a bitter gibe at the inconstant Londoner who had forsaken the great tragedians for the boy actor of the latest craze; Betterton, towering above the Auegan stable of the Restoration; Garrick the prudent, who sandwiched his own brilliant work between extravaganzas and musical farces. These great figures by the force of their personalities pulled up the poor level of taste in their day. They died off, and the level sank back again to what we now see around us. We have reached, indeed, the condition I ventured to point out that we were in danger of reaching when I went through the country some years ago lecturing on the needs of a State-endowed theatre—in other words the Shakespeare Memorial National Theatre. I ventured to say then "that in former days our theatre has suffered lapses from the high ideals which should animate the national drama. And she may suffer again if the high standard is not maintained by such an institution as it is designed that the Shakespeare Memorial National Theatre shall be. And the individual genius who can by private enterprise maintain the standard upon his own shoulders is a *rara avis*. He must unite in himself the enthusiasm of the artist, the need of the creator to

\* This address was delivered by Mr. Martin Harvey at the opening meeting of the Theatre Conference at Stratford-upon-Avon, organised by the British Drama League.



## THE CASE FOR A NATIONAL THEATRE

create, together with that capacity for unconscious self-sacrifice which disdains the consequence of those financial difficulties which will almost surely result (in the theatrical calling, at least) from the pursuit of the highest aims, irrespective of the means and the support. For we must face this fact: that the highest forms of dramatic representation do not as a rule pay. There have been rare instances when they have, but we must take the rule and not the exception. Let me recall to your minds the career of Sir Henry Irving. Long before his later misfortunes deprived him of the theatre he had, single-handed, reared into a national institution, he had realised that it was not for one man to bear upon his shoulders such a stupendous burden as the maintenance of a national theatre. In no other European country is he expected to do it. The State, the municipality, or the wealthy art patron assists him with his burden. We know the old argument on the side of British individual enterprise, and we know what that individual enterprise has accomplished. But how many of us know the cost when the enterprise has been exercised in the domain of theatrical art? We all look back with a glow of pride to the long series of revivals at the Lyceum Theatre under Sir Henry Irving, which have added such dignity to the annals of theatrical history, but how many of those revivals paid? And shall we always be willing to allow one man who has the genius to hold aloft such a national blessing on his own unbuttressed shoulders—I say, shall we always be willing to stand by and see him wear out many years of his precious life in this effort for our benefit?

"There have been, as I have said, long gaps in the history of the drama where no man has been found willing to sacrifice himself for the good of his generation. And what has been the history of the drama during that time? What drama, indeed, worthy of note has there been to chronicle? In the days to come we must not be content either to sacrifice more rare genius or to "muddle through" by trying to do the distinguished thing in a popular way, for that is an end which has never been achieved in the history of art. We must have an institution placed on a footing above the single necessity of paying, and which shall maintain a high standard of taste

when associated with the immortal name of Shakespeare. A taste for the highest forms of the drama is not, and is never likely to be, the taste of the average theatregoer."

I said that in 1909. Ladies and gentlemen, let us look the truth in the face. I believe that no progress in the betterment of the British drama in London will ever be reached until we have faced the truth without flinching or shame. I do not say it lightly when I tell you that few if *any* of Irving's Shakespearian productions paid; he was only able to keep the Lyceum open with the proceeds of long visits to the country and to America. To-day we have no one who will sacrifice himself for the benefit of the higher drama in London by maintaining on his own shoulders the great traditions of the past, no one who will face the poverty and disaster which will probably fall upon him in the autumn of his life, who *will* or *can* stem the tide of mere commercialism beneath which we are now submerged.

Well, that is our present position. Is there a remedy? I believe there is—I know there is. We are here to-day to discover it, if possible. I do not believe the remedy will be found in the activities of the many societies which are co-operating at this Conference unless these activities are combined with one single ultimate end in view, and that is, the *foundation and endowment* of a STATE THEATRE. If the eleven points which define the object of the British Drama League can be pursued with this *one object*, I believe the League will attain that object and confer a lasting blessing upon our people.

And this has brought me to my second essential for the success of this Conference—*concentration*.

I believe that only by *concentration* of the activities of these *various societies* can the permanent salvation of the drama in London be achieved. I would say, encourage the aims of these numerous societies by all the means in your power, but only with the express understanding that the State Theatre, the National Theatre, the Shakespeare Memorial National Theatre, call it what you will, is to be the great end in view, and if some of the objects of these societies, or if the objects contained in your eleven points do not further this end, cut them out. If, as I hope and pray may be the case, the ultimate decision of this

## THE CASE FOR A NATIONAL THEATRE

Conference is for concentration on the one great theatre *for London*, I venture to think that many of the objects laid down in the eleven points will be found to be superfluous. I doubt whether the *country* needs educating to an appreciation of great drama. I have found that Maeterlinck, Sophocles, and Shakespeare will draw crowds to the theatre. I do not think the children need educating—drama is inherent in them—Shakespeare they take to as a duck to water. I had occasion to point out in a lecture I delivered some time ago before the Birmingham University that it is the *poor* and the children who support Shakespeare. If the aim of the British Drama League is to co-ordinate its activities for the benefit of small groups and coteries of what for loss of a better word one may call "intellectuals," I confess that I am out of sympathy with that aim. It is the working classes—forgive me for using the objectionable expression—who need the beauty in their lives which great drama brings to them.

It is the most extraordinary thing to me that no Government has ever had the vision to perceive the necessity of *beauty* in the lives of the poor. It is true that some glimmering of this need is visible in the plans of the Government in relation to better housing of the workers—plans involving the expenditure of millions. But who has the vision to see that great drama at cheap prices is the most potent instrument for the refinement of the working classes, an instrument ready to their hands at the cost of a few thousands. I know of only one political party who has had the vision to see this need of the people for fine drama—the Labour Party. And they, too, have not only seen the need, but have had the splendid courage to state their intention to endow the drama as an item on their political platform. (I know who I shall vote for at the next election.) My great old chief, Sir Henry Irving, saw it. A cherished project of his was to have an enormous tent made, which he could set down in waste places of the Black Country, and in which he could present his great productions at cheap prices, so that the neglected workers in those dismal regions could see and hear the beauty for which their souls hungered. And so, ladies and gentlemen, I say concentrate yourselves on this great and worthy aim—gather up the scattered energies of these

innumerable small societies and unite them in this *one effort*. Do not let our England be a reproach to every other civilised community. Do not let the capital of this vast British Empire present the lamentable spectacle she presents to-day—to the scorn of our neighbours.

If the result of this Conference is the determination of those who have its objects at heart to found the British drama on some secure and dignified basis, which shall be a help and enlightenment to the people, let us build that foundation on a broad basis. Let the *truth* be recognised and faced, not with a whine about the woeful taste of London audiences, but with a vow to see it bettered. Let us concentrate upon the necessity of founding a great National Theatre, build a big one in the midst of the great labouring classes, admit them to great productions of the finest work at small prices. You will have less labour unrest if you remember that man does not live by bread alone, but by beauty in his life and food for his imagination. And if this should appeal to you as the wisest and broadest course to pursue, and should you seek the machinery to carry it into effect, where will you find a machine better fashioned than the carefully considered scheme of the Shakespeare Memorial National Theatre?

Let me remind you of its aims:

(1) To keep the plays of Shakespeare in its repertory.

(2) To revive whatever else is vital in English classical drama.

(3) To revive recent plays of great merit from falling into oblivion.

(4) To produce new plays and to further the development of modern drama.

(5) To produce translations or representative works of foreign drama, ancient and modern.

(6) To stimulate the art of acting through the varied opportunities which it will offer to the members of its company.

That is the scheme which has always had my devotion and always will have, and in so far as the eleven points of the British Drama League can be utilised to further this end, they shall have my support to the best of my ability.

It is useless to say that because the Shakespeare Memorial National Theatre has not yet had the support of the great public it is a

## THE COLOGNE AUDIENCE

sure proof that it is not wanted. In these cases the public is not articulate. The public does not always voice its need. I never heard that any deputation waited upon the Government with a desire for public baths. It has not clamoured for museums, for picture galleries, or for many things which, at the same time, it was only right for their well-being and their enlightenment that they should have.

Ladies and gentlemen, I fear I have kept you

too long and addressed you in far too didactic a spirit. If you have felt this, I can only ask your pardon and excuse myself on the score of my intense convictions—my deep love and respect for the art I follow, and my very ardent hope and belief that all that is so fine and worthy in it may be placed on a sure and honourable basis. This I firmly believe will come, and if the old parties do not seize the opportunity of doing something towards this end the Labour Party will.

## THE COLOGNE AUDIENCE

By "Agrippa"

THE REMARKABLE thing about the mass of German plays written in the last ten years is that by their seriousness and their unattractiveness they would have little chance of success in Great Britain or France. Among us a dramatic author has the double problem of writing a good play and at the same time giving his audience enough incident, fashionable dresses, and humour to induce them to listen to what he has to say, or at any rate to sit still while he says it. I am not concerned here with serious dramatic qualities, but with just those trivial features which appeal to an ordinary audience. The German dramatist does not seem to bother about the audience. He has no scruple in writing a play with an unhappy ending, set in a dowdy or plebeian milieu (no smart dresses, no "nice" part for Miss Gladys Cooper), unrelieved by humour, and full of long, serious monologues and discussions. Moreover, he is fond of a philosophic symbolism which is hard to understand and sometimes meaningless. This last tendency is at least as old as *Faust* and has received new inspiration from the example of Ibsen and Strindberg, it is encouraged by the thoroughly unhelpful body of German dramatic criticism, which, instead of saying what is good or bad in a play and what is sound or false in an argument, lets itself loose in such useless generalities as this: "Rudolph personifies the creative, upward striving Man Soul, hemmed in by the stress of circumstances in its effort to freedom, whereas Hedwig represents the gentler, more

emotional, more attached to the hearth Woman Nature; the whole work is permeated with an all-embracing and at the same time all-animating feeling of humanity."

Plays of this sort are regularly performed, not only in the capital, but all over Germany. The "commercial" play with which one is familiar at home and in France simply is not written. The Municipal Theatre at Cologne is packed every night with ordinary citizens who, since March, have seen, besides the usual classical works of Schiller, Grillparzer, etc., the *Medea*, *Ghosts*, *Pillars of Society*, a morbid fairy-tale by Strindberg, Hauptmann's partly incomprehensible *Versunkene Glocke* and his poetic tragedy *Elga*, Sudermann's bourgeois tragedies *Johannisfeuer* and *Das Glueck im Winkel*, Halbe's *Strom* (a gloomy drama), Georg Kaiser's *Versuchung* (a drab-coloured play, which would certainly leave an unpleasant taste in a London critic's mouth), and Goering's *Seeschlacht*, a symbolic picture of the war, set in the interior of a gun-turret, in which seven unnamed sailors wail out the author's ideas on war as shell after shell bursts among them.\*

And the astonishing thing is that the crowds who watch these plays have every appearance of enjoying themselves.

"Happy land," the British dramatist will exclaim, "in which you can be as serious or as dull as you like without fear of the

\* This is, of course, not a serious criticism of the plays, but an account of that aspect of them with which this essay is concerned.

## THE COLOGNE AUDIENCE

audience growing restive!" And it is of interest to the Drama League to examine this mentality of the German public. First, there is no doubt that the German is better educated as a spectator of the drama than the Briton or Frenchman. An Englishman who is intelligent in his choice of a book is content in a theatre with stuff on the level of the — *Magazine*. It must also be remembered that the German is simpler and less snobbish than the Englishman, and has loved homely, bourgeois drama since *Miss Sara Sampson* was first produced. Again, theatre-going is so cheap and such a regular part of a German's life, especially with the season-ticket system, that he does not ask for such exhilarating and sustained amusement as the Briton who spends a lot on one play and makes an event of it. But the German play-wright has another quite special advantage.

The Cologne devotees of this stern and elevated drama are extraordinarily stupid. From their laughter, their comments and their failure to take up points it is clear that they are far from understanding the plays through which they sit so quietly. They laugh at the most tragic or pathetic incidents if they are externally absurd or homely, not with hostile jeers, but with the appreciation of simple souls who think it is meant to be funny. Hearty exclamations like "Schafskopf!" references to drinking beer, and bluff, jovial characters (e.g., a jolly man in *Die Versuchung*, whose coarseness is one cause of the tragedy, and sailors dancing and singing with ghastly joy at the prospect of battle in *Seeschlacht*) infallibly cause merriment. A packed Solingen audience was kept in a constant ripple of mirth by the foul abuse bandied about in Schoenherr's brutal peasant tragedy *Der Weibsteufel*. And the same stout burghers and their dames and their Backfische placidly contemplate the most ferocious and revolutionary scenes—scenes which no British Chamberlain would pass—and seem quite unconcerned when the "lustiger Kerl" whom they thought such fun proves to be the villain of the piece or meets a horrible death.

Why do these people, who are certainly less intelligent than a French audience, tolerate

plays which are intellectually above the level of anything which would succeed in a Paris theatre?

The great thing is that in Germany the theatre is taken seriously. There are strict rules against arriving late or leaving early, and there is none of that restaurant atmosphere of orchestra, chocolates and tea-cups which is so fatal to serious drama in England. The attitude of the German playgoer seems to be that of the British churchgoer, in his quiet, orderly behaviour, the small demand which he makes for amusement and in his lack of critical intelligence. The Cologne Hausfrau does not understand the symbolic passages in *Faust* or *Die Versunkene Glocke*, or the philosophical and psychological arguments in a play of ordinary life, any more than her U.F. sister understands the minister's exposition of the Pauline eschatology or John I., i.; but she gets a sense of elevation and well-being from the high-sounding mystical verbiage (instead of that blessed word "Mesopotamia" it is those blessed words "Morning-Red," "World-Spirit," and "Youth-Revolt") and at the same time she finds a certain amount of amusement in the scenery and acting, and understands enough of individual incidents not to feel utterly at sea.

This attitude of uncritical reverence is all for the good of the drama. No doubt it gives the empty wind-bag a chance, but it also allows the serious dramatist to say what he wants to say without feeling obliged to conciliate his audience with tricks in which he is neither interested nor expert. It is to a great extent in consequence of this that so many excellent plays are written and acted in Germany, and that at this moment Cologne has far more to offer the playgoer than London. The object of this contribution to the studies of the Drama League is to suggest that, without trying to induce in the British mind the complete fatuity of the Cologne audience, we must persuade our public to treat the theatre as a normal, inexpensive, not necessarily very exciting activity of every-day life if the path of the serious dramatist and producer is to be as smooth, and the national drama is to be as good as they are in Germany.

# REMINISCENCES OF A MANCUNIAN PLAYGOER

By F. Sladen-Smith

WHY should the luxury of reminiscence be the perquisite of crabbed old age or of that doubtful period of life euphemistically called "the prime"?

There is a rich, olive-green joy in reminiscence, a soft, ineffable glow that goes with a shake of the head, a melancholy smile and a gentle feeling of contented sadness; and is all this mellowness, this autumnal splendour to be the special prerogative of the truly aged? Clearly a monstrous injustice.

Beshrew me, have I not been a devout Mancunian playgoer for years? Shall I not therefore shake my head over the times that were? A fig for first-hand knowledge of State secrets. I sat in the pit whenever I could, which was often. Therefore will I indulge in reminiscence.

Well then; to help us on our way to dramatic salvation, we had in the remote past famous Shakespearean revivals, annual visits of Irving and kindred stars, and the great Gaiety period; and over all the Town Hall clock boomed genially, if a trifle monotonously.

Wonderful affair the Town Hall clock, one of the few really cheerful things in Manchester. Its huge, unlovely face discreetly ogles all quarters of the city and is generally the first thing seen when looking out of the train on the return from some holiday—and most visits away from Manchester *are* holidays! Never dismal, never despondent; great was the sorrow when the grey horrors of a never-ending war compelled it to hide its glory at night and we were bereft of its glowing consolation. But now, as a sign that things have really changed, in all weathers and seasons, it hangs once more in the sky like a great lighthouse, with almost the calm aloofness of the moon—almost but not quite, the moon is more cynical; and underneath the theatreland of Manchester goes about its business.

And in all weathers and all seasons the faithful have flocked to the theatres and waited for hours outside, lined up in dismal queues, while the fogs, snows and bitter winds of the Manchester winter assailed their lungs and throats;

waited with a brave persistency, worthy perhaps not of a better cause, but at least of the sincere admiration always accorded to genuine valour.

They went in a spirit of cheerful faith, they paid their money and hoped for the best. And they found it best when it was local.

Manchester naturally glories in things local. Other cities have at times a strange knack of dimly resembling London—in fact, there are parts of Liverpool that might very easily be London—but Manchester being, of course, just . . . . . Manchester, there is nothing quite the same anywhere else. It is like a very ugly woman with a very wonderful soul and consequently is an acquired taste. Things redolent of the place, born and bred in its atmosphere, rejoice and uplift the soul of the Mancunian as nothing else could do—why, the Manchester school of drama was alive and kicking when the rest of drama was dead! Or at least we liked to think so.

But before the Gaiety period—before the great movement that set about transforming the dramatic life of Manchester (and has actually succeeded in doing so, quite as much by its present death as by its past vigorous existence)—before then we had nothing but the annual Shakespearean revivals and the autumnal visits of Irving, Beerbohm Tree and as many London stars as could be crammed in during the space of three or four months.

The annual Shakespearean revival—what a joy it was! Why, when the moon came out it came out in six moons, all in different places, not one paltry beam of light; and whenever anything could be real it *was* real, absolutely real. There were real deer, real horses, real goats, real waterfalls, real acrobats, and at the least hint of a church or anything bordering on religion real incense and dozens of acolytes. In fact, the Church had always more than a lion's share of the show, and the pious Nonconformists, who came in serried ranks to the matinées, gazed with a delicious, horrified joy at the fearful orgies of eternal Rome. This, they felt, this was indeed the Scarlet Woman actually before their very eyes.

"Ye vassal slaves of bloody Rome!" said a



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man in the pit. "Yes, sir, that's what I said. If Scott can swear, so can I!" . . . . .

It was all as vigorous and fruity as it could well be, and whenever there was the faintest chance of our getting bored or unduly depressed we had a procession or a jolly dance or a troupe of acrobats or a flock of ghosts. It was perhaps a little difficult at first to become accustomed to the spirit of violent unreality that reigned supreme, but after the rigour of the opening scene one settled down, hugely to enjoy the smoke and the fuss and the glitter; the only distraction being an awful wonder, suppressed but nevertheless painfully there, as to what Shakespeare would have felt about it all and the still more awful thought that he would probably have enjoyed it as much as anyone.

Then to keep us alive while waiting for our annual dose of Shakespeare there was the usual procession of the great stars, descending from London and actually appearing before us in the flesh, looking quite like their photographs—some of them. And we flocked, not to see the play—I doubt if that was ever thought of—but to see the great ones, to mark how they came on and how they went off (which was seldom), to shout "Speech!" at the end, and to clap frantically as a sign of gratitude when the speech was over—and over it was with remarkable celerity.

As usual, waiting outside in the rain was part of the ritual, although why it was not our death over and over again no one can tell. After all, why doesn't it kill people to wait outside a theatre in the pouring rain for hours? Imagine it being compulsory to wait outside the churches for a similar time, imagine the leaders in the papers on the prevalence of bronchial-pneumonia! Evidently a good angel has been specially created to protect the devout pittance.

We waited ages outside the theatre, we waited ages inside the theatre until at last the play began and HE or SHE, or possibly BOTH, came on the stage to a sustained roar of applause. It was worth it, it was decidedly worth it. It is the custom to scoff at the star system now—indeed some of us have even learnt to take an interest in the play as a play, apart from the personalities in it—but while it lasted it was a most exciting form of hero worship. There they were, large as life and wonderfully, profoundly unnatural, the great stars of the dramatic world, the only pity

being they were not exactly local. Still, in a few months something really of our own would come along; meanwhile there they were and we flocked to see them, especially Irving.

Although I doubt if we ever saw Irving. Just before his death Irving had collected such a vast cloud of tradition, of veneration, of ritual, of atmosphere around him that I doubt if we of the younger generation ever saw him at all. We sat there, utterly dazed by all we had heard and read beforehand, like the religious devotee, hardly seeing the altar for the faith that burns within, while the great man tottered and mumbled through "Waterloo" and "The Bells." "Waterloo" and "The Bells"! Surely there has been a *little* improvement since those days; it is impossible to believe that even the genius of Irving could make some of those plays acceptable again.

Perhaps, though, we saw him once in "Becket" one great afternoon. There are memories of the huge audience, the intense heat, the extraordinary grandeur infused into the play whenever he appeared, and the violent and rather terrible contrast caused by the sudden opening of a side door displaying a grimy street bathed in vivid sunshine. But in general Irving was the object of so much veneration that whatever he did and whatever he acted was received with humble gratitude, and criticism at that period was hushed and still.

"Mother," said a youthful voice, "why does he twist his mouth like that?"

"Henrietta," was the stern rejoinder, "if your father hears you being so wicked . . . . ."

For the rest, we had the usual people in the usual costume romantic or modern play, and supported them with fervour.

And then suddenly, the Gaiety!

Of course, it could not have come suddenly, but it appeared so to us, owing to invincible ignorance. Quite suddenly we were told we were about to be born again. Just like that. It was thrilling.

Not that there was propaganda of this sort, far from it. The movement began quietly enough at the Midland Theatre.

"I suppose we ought to go," said a friend. "I suppose we *ought* to go."

We went. "Widowers' Houses"—astounding! It was alive, it was astoundingly alive. There was no breakneck rush to the footlights; the players actually acted for the sake of acting



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and for the sake of the play and the result was an astonishing unity. And the joy of seeing a play that was a play and not a mere peg to hang mannerisms on!

Then came the opening of the Gaiety and all the great first nights. Those were exciting days; the whole idea, the whole system was refreshingly new to Manchester, and it was also local, thank God—a heroic attempt to set the dramatic world on its feet actually made in Manchester.

It was also unspeakably refreshing to see the principals in one week's production coming on as waiters or servants in the next; the star system with all its evil habits had apparently vanished. In those early days all types of plays were produced, all manner of experiments attempted, there was as yet no sinister suspicion of a "school." And when one devout Gaietyite met another devout Gaietyite the conversation became full of strange terms and obscure quotations, sudden bursts of laughter and swift silences of ecstatic remembrance. In certain circles a conversation began as a matter of course by saying, "Have you seen 'Nan'?" or "Have you seen the 'Silver Box'?" Those who were not Gaietyites—alas, often the majority—loathed them exceedingly.

After a while, however, a significant change crept in. Instead of asking, "Have you seen 'Strife'?" etc., people asked, "Have you seen so and so *in* such a play?" This meant many things. Manchester had taken the Gaiety company to its heart in its own particular manner, and the result was—the star system over again? Whatever it was, it could hardly be wondered at; still, it meant a change—a change in many ways.

Meanwhile the Gaiety did some astonishing things. It discovered local genius—to the huge and immense gratification of everyone; it converted to the true faith all manner of people who had walked in dramatic darkness for years—people who up to then had seen plays as stars walking; it produced a very trying type of young man who attended all the first nights and talked about the repertory movement and modern drama much as God might discuss the House of Commons; it cried aloud that there was such a thing as dramatic vitality—and actually proved it; it played a miraculous production of "The Trojan Woman" to miraculously empty houses; it brought "The

Fantastics" and "Prunella" right into the gloom and dirt of Manchester, where they shone like delicate and wonderful jewels; while on the realistic side "Strife," "Justice," "The Silver Box" and many other plays were remarkable examples of stagecraft; and all the time it gave the pessimists unlimited and glorious opportunities of expounding to the faithful why it didn't pay, couldn't pay and never would pay.

Some people went, they did not quite know why.

"It takes you all your time to find out what they're doing when you come here," said a young person to her friend. "Sometimes my head fairly splits." . . . . .

One thing had to be avoided at all costs. It must not be an "art" theatre, and, by Jove, it wasn't, as a rule! Still, there are great memories of many beautiful productions, especially the ill-fated "Julius Cæsar," from which so many sorrows sprang.

Then a change crept in, slowly, insidiously, due to a variety of complex reasons. The greatest and by far the most brilliant of the Gaiety successes seemed to colour the whole policy of the theatre, and the drama of colour, which had never had more than a precarious foothold at any time, vanished completely. Also, surely, there was less experimental work—after a time decidedly less experimental work: there were evenings when it required a strong act of faith to believe it *was* the Gaiety as we knew it in the old days.

And with regard to gloom—but one isn't allowed to say much about that. The fiat has gone forth "Thou shalt not call thy Gaiety gloomy," and we bow our heads. But for all that, at times, sitting in a rather cold atmosphere amid a chilling silence, waiting for the somewhat gloomy note of a somewhat gloomy gong and acknowledging the chaste nods of the few friends present—well, it was not exactly *bright*, was it?—especially when the curtain rose on one more Lancashire interior, with one more couple sitting by a table and giving way to floods of dialect.

Then war and more war and finally all war, until the Gaiety sank under the pressure of a revue-haunted, war-crazy period. As soon as it was decided—by a committee of experts, of course—that the Gaiety was really dead, up rose thousands of Jeremiahs, and they wailed

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dismally, crying aloud for that which was lost. They howled for the days for ever gone; they exhausted themselves pointing out the glory and beauty of the past. "Then," we were told, "we really *had* a theatre, then Manchester was in the forefront of dramatic progress." Yet when the Gaiety was with us and producing play after play at highest pressure, where were all the dismal ones who now wept salt tears over their great loss? Crowding the theatre, packing it nightly, helping on the cause they had at heart with their enthusiasm and zeal, causing the free list to become unusually suspended? Well, I am sure they would have done these things—if they had thought about them at the time.

Revues, revues and then more revues, and if you wanted a change there were musical comedies; the change being that they were (and are) longer. Endless processions of dancing girls, barbaric thumps from the orchestra and over all—war.

"But class A, you know," said a young man, as the curtain fell on the sublime spectacle of fifty chorus girls representing the flags of the Allies grouped round the statue of Liberty—"Class A, that's what gets over me. Fit for active service as soon as trained. I keep on going out and having coffees . . . ."

Of course, it bred a revolt, and the revolt broke out in all manner of unexpected places. The Lancashire Catholic Players did a remarkable performance of "The Upper Room"—in every way a wonderful contrast to the appalling theatrical conditions prevailing, although surely it was an evil hour when they elected to try their hand at "Magic" for their next production. Also the Unnamed Society was beginning to open its esoteric eye.

It is rather strange that the Unnamed Society should be a product of Manchester, but probably it is one more illustration of the fact that contrast is the essential salt of life. Certainly its quaint, simple productions, the work throughout of a group of artists of singular unity of aim, are as big a contrast to the ludicrous extravagance of the ordinary theatre as one could wish, and no doubt the audience feels the contrast also between a comfortable tip-up seat in a big spacious auditorium to a chair, precariously won, in a small room at the extreme top of a building; but as this does not deter an audience from coming, and coming

frequently, one is driven to the conclusion that a constant striving for colour and beauty and bolder experiments in things dramatic are not of necessity doomed to failure. From which glowing account it will probably be surmised that the writer of these remarks is a member of the Unnamed Society, which is a perfectly correct supposition.

Of course, in the professional world the great change and contrast to revue was the sudden and startling advent of Opera—Opera when it was Grand. Not comic Opera, nothing like that; not just Opera, that is much too simple; but *Grand* Opera. That was also gratifying, because it was and is *our* Grand Opera. The same enthusiasm that earlier took the Gaiety company to its heart and made them part and parcel of the life of the city has taken the opera singers and made them household words, not to say household gods. The success has been enormous, and doubtless will continue to be enormous. On any hot June night you may see vast crowds of the devout literally sitting on top of each other and consequently in a condition of incredible discomfort and heat, but with the light of faith and joy shining on their honest countenances, all aglow with the feeling that it is indeed *Grand*. And so it is.

Grand Opera having become the fashion, the result is a phenomenal success, but this success would not have been attained without a sound substratum of musical life and musical tradition to build on. There is a sound substratum to the dramatic life of Manchester also; the Gaiety influence is still with us—indeed, it is only now we are seeing what a tremendous work the Gaiety accomplished; all is ready for a great revival in all directions.

Things are, of course, stirring. There is much talk of a Little Theatre, much discussion; indeed, a belief is gaining ground that the Little Theatre is a sovereign cure for all the ills the theatre is heir to—and some people have expressed surprise to hear the Gaiety is not by any means dead—things are stirring. The Playgoers' Club rouses itself from a somewhat lengthy slumber, induced by interminable lectures and debates, and asks, in a surprisingly vigorous tone of voice, "Where is the Little Theatre?" The Unnamed Society rolls its aforesaid esoteric eye and boldly says, "Here is the Little Theatre." There are rumours that the Stockport Garrick (dread name, at which

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every dramatic knee should tremble) is about to build a Little Theatre. One thing is certain. Sooner or later we shall *all* have a Little Theatre somewhere, somehow. And the innumerable small dramatic societies that before the war increased and multiplied with such astounding fertility are beginning to lift up their heads and snuff the cool air of the Armistice. "Lo," they say, "lo, now the winter is over and

the rain past and gone! . . ." God bless them!

And over all hangs the huge, unlovely, vastly amiable face of the Town Hall clock. Cold and matter-of-fact all day, as becomes a devout Mancunian, at night it glows with a comforting radiance and smiles gently, doubtless realising that, like everything else truly vital beneath it, it is intensely, overwhelmingly local.

## THE DRAMA IN WALES

By John Colwyn

**B**ORROW, somewhere in his book, "Wild Wales," tells of an "Interlude" he saw acted in a Welsh village. That primitive type of dramatic art was dialogue in poetic form. When Borrow wrote, that was as far as the drama had gone in Wales. As it was, the pious felt it had gone too far. And in the revival of Puritanism it was swept away along with everything else that savoured of the world, the flesh, and—the stage.

For a long time afterwards in religious Wales, theatres and play-acting were held to be of the devil. Even within the memory of men who have by no means grown old, members of Nonconformist chapels were publicly expelled for attending theatres and for taking part in performances of plays. But during the past quarter of a century the pendulum has been swinging slowly yet surely in the opposite direction. In some places still the old prejudice remains. But it has lost its nerve. To-day Wales is in the grip of a dramatic movement which is bound to leave its mark on the land and its people.

The reaction against the puritanical ban came in three stages, each of which is clearly defined. The National Eisteddfod, with its offer of substantial prizes for Welsh plays, first showed the way out of the inartistic wilderness into which Puritanism had driven our imaginative writers. Afterwards, or perhaps one should say concurrently, the novel began to raise its head. But the present movement owes more to the national colleges than to any other single factor one could name. Aberystwyth

especially has made notable contributions to contemporary native drama. Cardiff also deserves honourable mention for the work it has done and is doing. The first Welsh play ever performed in a real theatre owed its existence to the stimulus of the Welsh Society of the Cardiff University College.

In naming the factors that have helped the movement along, tribute must be paid to the influence and patronage of private individuals. Lord Howard de Walden and Miss Horniman especially have shown deep sympathy with the efforts of Welsh playwrights and, moreover, have given their sympathy a practical turn. Lord Howard's offer of a handsome prize for the best play dealing with Welsh life gave us Mr. J. O. Francis' "Change," which was performed in London, and the American rights of which were subsequently sold to a manager from the States. Miss Horniman produced in Manchester, and afterwards in London, an excellent one-act play, translated from the Welsh, and entitled "Where is He?" by Mr. D. T. Davies, a graduate of Aberystwyth College. At the Liverpool Playhouse a one-act play, "The Lost Legacy," was produced in 1918 under the direction of Mr. Percy Foster. Its author was the writer of these lines.

But the most noticeable feature of the whole movement is the manner in which it has captured the churches. Here time has taken its revenge with a vengeance. The native Welsh dramatist has carried the war into the very camp of his ancient enemy, and routed him. Some of the best work in the vernacular has come from Nonconformist ministers. That fact

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in itself is clear proof that the puritanical ban has lost its terrors, and the hoary prejudice of power to stultify Art. The Rev. R. G. Berry has several fine plays to his credit, and there is scarcely a village of any importance in Wales where his work as a playwright is not known. Directly connected with many churches in North and South Wales are flourishing dramatic societies, and they have done much to bind the younger adherents together, and to give them a pleasant, instructive, and intellectually profitable occupation for their hours of leisure. Incidentally—and I have no doubt the point has weighed heavily in the scales against the scruples of many a pious elder—they have contributed much in money towards the liquidation of chapel debts.

The preliminary list of subjects in connection with the National Eisteddfod of Wales to be held in Carnarvon in 1921, includes a Welsh play for which a prize of fifty pounds is offered. The adjudicators, of whom the present writer happens to be one, have to publish their award next year. The successful play will then be published, and a further prize of fifty pounds will be offered for the best public performance of it. Lord Howard de Walden tells me he is about to offer another prize for the best play dealing with a Welsh theme. All things considered, therefore, a good deal is being done to develop the latent talents of our aspiring Welsh playwrights. That the right material is there everyone is convinced who has first-hand knowledge of the dramatic genius of the people.

What the movement most needs now is kindly criticism of a constructive kind. Here, in Wales, is a virgin field. In this part of the world there is scarcely any point in speaking of the decadence of the drama, for the good and sufficient reason that there has been nothing to decay. Those, therefore, who are concerned for the future of dramatic art in Britain can render most effective service to the cause by helping Welsh playwrights to steer clear of the evils that have afflicted the stage in England. Speaking generally, our playwrights and players in Wales have almost everything to learn. Wise guidance and discerning encouragement our people must have if they are to bring their powers to maturity. We are woefully deficient

in the whole technique of the stage. Many of our budding playwrights who have something to say that is really worth saying do not know how to say it. Our amateur actors have yet to learn that to be simple and natural on the stage is all that is required of them. They are given over-much to the artificial and the melodramatic. Above everything, we have to be taught to avoid the snare of commercialism as though it were a plague. Hitherto, one is glad to be able to say it, money has played but an insignificant part in the dramatic movement in Wales. Neither playwrights nor players have made anything worth mentioning out of it. The work that has been done so far has been marked by great sincerity and by devotion to Art for Art's sake. That statement may fall with a strange sound on ears which know no better music than that of the box-office. But, as far as Wales is concerned, it happens to be true. And the aim of those of us who really care for the future of the drama in Wales is to keep it true.

One feels, too, that if the drama in Wales is to be an effective vehicle of sincere and artistic expression, the movement must be organised. Of course, one is well aware there is a danger in that—the danger of becoming mechanical. But we are faced at the moment by a danger of a different kind. The drama in Wales is a parochial thing; it ought to be national. Means must be devised of bringing the very best within reach of the many. Lord Howard's Repertoire Company, until the war put a stop to its work, did a great deal to carry good plays both to large centres of population, where the people knew nothing better than plays of no consequence acted by people of no importance, and to country districts, where the people rarely had a chance of seeing a play of any sort previously. It is good news to hear that Lord Howard proposes to revive the idea as soon as circumstances permit. For the rest, an organised attempt must be made to popularise the Little Theatre movement in Wales. The fairest garden in the world left to itself will find its beauty at last choked by weeds. And if the dramatic movement in Wales is to be kept in bloom, it must be carefully tended by those whose knowledge and sympathy are equal to the task.

# PRODUCING A VILLAGE PLAY

By Pamela Colman Smith

“A PLAY by the school children? How delightful!” they all said. “Nothing easier,” they all thought. But even to do a very simple play, with few characters, means a lot of work.

“We can all sew,” they said. But had to be told how to put things together, and a hood of the middle ages is not a little bewildering, even to one who can sew and make charming blouses.

Then, when the clothes are finished, they must be put on with knowledge. A wimple, for instance, is but a matter of strips of material and pins, but one must know how to use them.

A bare stage, no lighting arrangements, and a wall into which no nails may be driven. The difficulties begin to grow.

Following is the description of a Nativity play that was produced by me in a village hall a few months ago. It sounds dull, and is merely what was done, and how it was done, but it may be of use to others wishing to produce a village play.

The play itself was adapted from a synopsis that was published in a magazine. There were no stage directions. They had to be made, and the play written and made actable and speakable. At the first rehearsal the play was read to the school children who were to act it—they listened breathlessly. Then the parts were distributed and read by the children themselves.

After that the play was walked through, the places of the actors and position of doors and furniture arranged, entrances and exits planned, and so on. This was all done in the schoolroom, where the position of chairs and benches were settled, and not altered at all when we got on the stage.

If the producer sees all this planning in the mind's eye before beginning rehearsals, all muddles and afterthoughts can be avoided. At the end of the first rehearsal, greatly excited, the children took home their parts and were almost word-perfect at the next rehearsal.

Every day there was a rehearsal call pinned on the blackboard. One tried to make it as like the real thing as one could, and the children felt that it was like a “real, live” play, though. I think, not one of them had ever been in a theatre.

After three rehearsals in the schoolroom we went to the village hall and on the stage.

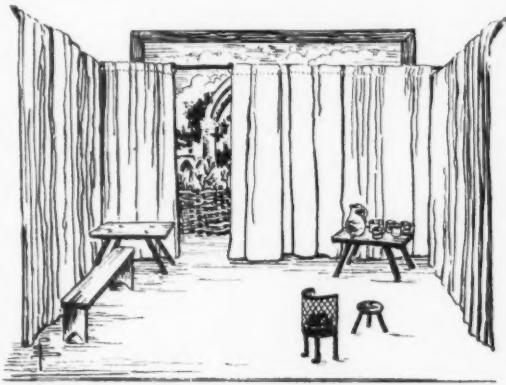
The stage itself was of boards on trestles, four feet high, and was about sixteen feet square. Curtains hung on each side from front to back, and one big curtain across the front. On the wall at the back of the stage was a large painting in a wooden frame.

The first scene of the play was a room at an inn. So three sheets were lent, widely hemmed at one end and threaded on the jointed pole of the dusting-mop from the school. This pole was then suspended from the two side poles on which the side curtains were already hung, in front of the painting, so that the curtain covered most of the painting at the back of the stage.

A hurdle was procured and stuck with green branches, so that it hid the lower part of the picture frame; it was put behind a gap between two sheets making a doorway.

A long form, a three-legged stool, and two washing benches were the only furniture.

A brazier was made of a wire fireguard, with red cotton, black buckram, and brown paper, and an electric torch hidden among red muslin coals. The greatest difficulty was the lighting





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of the stage. At the afternoon performance the sun streamed in at all the windows, and there was no ladder high enough to reach them to cover them with paper, and when someone suggested doing so they were not able to reach the windows, and, with the shortage of paper, I do not think there would have been enough



in all the village to cover the windows. In the evening a large oil lamp hung directly over the stage, there was no other safe place to stand or hang it; it cast a round shadow entirely over the centre of the stage and only the corners were lighted.

Two candles in tin lanterns upon a table—one of them was used in the play and carried about. They looked quite well.

Scene one.—A room at an inn.

Hostess setting out mugs and jugs on a bench. A boy in doorway with bundles of faggots. The hostess scolds the boy for being slow, and asks what he is listening for. He replies that he is listening for "them." They always come at Christmas.

She tells him to make ready his bed for the pedlar who is to sleep there that night. The boy says if the pedlar stays there will be no room for "them."

"I should like them to have a soft bed, and tall candles burning, one for Our Lord and one for Our Lady." He goes off, and enter the pedlar, who sits by the brazier, and has a mug of cold tea ale from the hostess.

A ploughman enters—and there is byplay with hostess—and then a shepherd and a wood-chopper enter, and lastly a wounded soldier.

They talk of the cold and the snow and its being Christmastide.

The boy comes back and asks the ploughman and the other wayfarers if they have seen anyone on the road. They all say no but the soldier who says he has met some children carol-singers.

Then it is that St. Joseph and Our Lady come to the door and ask for shelter.

They are turned away by the hostess. The boy, Robin, her son, says: "There's room in the stable, mother." The hostess argues about strangers in her stable, but finally she tells the boy to show them the way. He takes a lantern and goes out.

One by one the others talk of helping to make a fire and a bed of straw. The hostess says she might find a bit of supper. The pedlar shows a shawl from his pack, and at last, when they have all gone, leaving the stage empty, enter two small angels in rose-colour, who dance and then stand down-stage at each corner.

Then the children carol-singers come, in caps and mufflers. (They wore their own, but would look well in hoods and cloaks.) Re-enter the ploughman and shepherd, who say they cannot find the stable in the dark, and ask the children to sing a carol—they do so, and then a second one. Re-enter Robin with lantern, and the children ask him where "they are" and

Hood.



have "they come"? The children say they have brought gifts, and wish to sing carols to the Holy Babe.

Then Robin leads them out—followed by the ploughman and shepherd.

Then the angels bow and dance and exeunt also, and that is the end of the first scene.

The second scene was the stable.

Having tried in vain to build a shed with broomsticks, which suddenly twisted and fell



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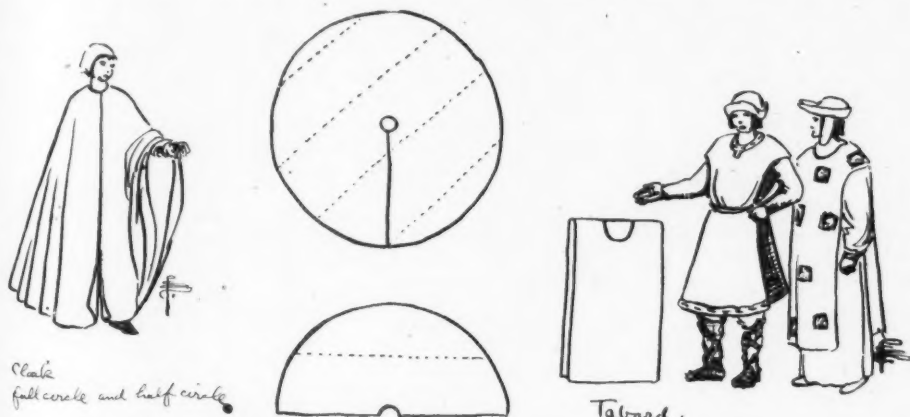
down as soon as it was finished—and no Boy Scouts being near-by to help—the stable ended being a manger only.

A sheep-crutch, filled with straw and set on the top of a basket, covered by boughs of evergreen and yew. A plaster babe was borrowed from the church and set among the straw, with the torchlight hidden in the boughs of green, which threw a light up on to the face of the Blessed Virgin, played by a little girl of eight, and looking quite lovely in a rose-coloured dress and blue cloak, a wimple of blue and silver tinsel, a veil of dark blue with silver stars, and a crown of silver tinsel ribbon wound on wire.

St. Joseph in a pair of dark trousers cross-gartered to the knee, with rags in strips, a blue

the hit of the play by making up a part for himself. He limped up to the crib and put down his crutch and then danced about for joy, crying "Cured—cured!"

The Three Kings then stalked in full of dignity. They each had a few lines to say, and each brought a gift to the babe. A gold crown, a brass box, and a bit of wood covered with red cotton and gold tinsel with wool tassels at the ends were the gifts, and looked very grand. Then the two little angels came in with gilded buckets filled with leaves, and scattered them and danced slowly in front of the crib, to a Pavanne by Purcell. Then the carol-singers sang a carol, everyone joined in, and this brought the play to an end.



cotton smock, a black nun's veiling cloak, a red cotton hood and a staff. He had a beard made of black cloth cut in strips and sewn with grey wool.

Our Lady sat on an overturned basket, and they made an effective picture against the painting at the back of the stage, which was of a ruined abbey and was now entirely visible, the sheets having been pulled aside to the end of the dusting-pole.

There was little for anyone to speak in this scene, and each one brought their gift to the babe and put it by the manger.

One character—the wounded soldier—in a blue cotton jacket and with bandaged leg and foot and a crutch he had made himself, made

The children were thrilled with delight by the dresses of bright colours and the bits of gold and silver tinsel, and said, when they saw the dresses for the first time, "Oh, 'twill be lovely when 'tis done!"

The materials for the dresses for this production came to about five pounds. In other days it would have cost somewhat less. But the skilled labour of the production—re-writing the play, rehearsals, cutting out the dresses, making some and showing others how to make them, making and collecting the properties and "hand properties," posters, &c.—was all unpaid labour and would work out to a good sum if paid even at an hourly wage.

When one plans out a production of any kind

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one is apt to leave out the question of paying for these things.

Here follow a few directions of how to make the hoods, cloaks, tabards and smocks:

A hood can be made of one yard of 40-inch material—this will be large enough for a child, but should be made larger for a grown-up.

It may be faced inside with a different colour and turned back off the face when it is on.

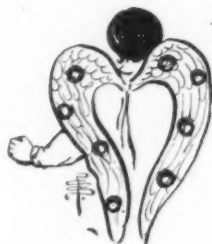


Wimples.

The hood must be pulled well forward and on to the head, so that it may fit close in at the back of the neck. The long point, or lyrie-pipe, may be worn hanging down the back or wound round the neck and hung down in front. The point may also be stuffed.

Tabards. I used two yards of cotton material, the neck cut out in front and straight across the back; at the bottom coloured braid or tinsel, and also the same round the neck.

Some of the actors wore a belt or scarf round the waist, and some were worn hanging loose.



Wings of butterfly,  
painted feathers  
On wire frames.

Cloaks. Four yards of 40-inch material will make a half-circle cloak. But a full circle cloak will take ten to twelve yards joined on the cross,

a small hole in the centre for the neck, and open down the front.

Wimple. Two strips of butter muslin, cream colour, or any soft gauze or soft crape material—sometimes one can use tinsel gauze. One bit under chin, pinned on top of head; other bit round forehead, pinned at back; then veil over all, or hood worn over it.

Beards. Cut in cloth and fringed at the edge; on black beard I sewed bits of blue wool and

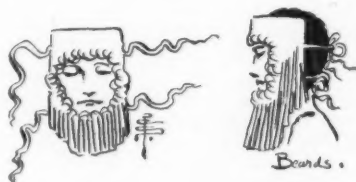


Smocks.

grey wool, and loops at the edge near the face to soften the line. Tapes at the top to tie round head, and also at chin to keep it from falling away from the face.

Smock. Two yards and a half of 40-inch material (less, and cut smaller for a child). Cut out neck in front; straight across back. Can be long or short.

One hopes many plays will be done in small halls and schoolrooms in the future, and I



Beards.

hope that these rough notes may be of some use to any who think of producing a village play or pageant.

NOTE.—Miss Colman Smith will be pleased to answer any enquiries, which may be addressed to the Hon. Secretary of the Drama League, in connection with the performance of this Nativity play by village groups affiliated to the League.

# VILLAGE PLAYS IN WEST CORNWALL

By R. Morton Nance

SO many hopes are now being fixed upon the village play that the tale of a little venture into the realms of drama made in the isolation of a remote Cornish village may perhaps be worth the telling. It should at least encourage others who, knowing nothing whatever of the arts of the stage, would make a similar attempt, to know that an artist couple, without any outside help, succeeded in raising, training, and keeping together a village company, fitting them not only with home-made costumes, but also with plays of their own, and thus entertaining many village audiences for several years in succession.

In all this we were evidently doing pioneer work for a great movement, but at that time, ten years ago, so far from realising this, we knew only that we were following many, many years in the rear, an almost forgotten dramatic tradition—that of the Cornish Droll.

In the acting games of children, and to a very slight extent in the Christmas mummeries of "guise-dancing," popular drama still survives in Cornwall. These, however, are but a very feeble outlet for the dramatic instincts that down to the seventeenth century found a vent in the Old Cornish Miracle play, and might show themselves far later in the St. George play, of which Cornish versions are among the best. In all of these plays of the people, too, old and new, the human element is somewhat lacking, and more interesting by far must have been a sort of performance, indigenous perhaps to the Land's End district, although borrowing from strolling players its name, reminiscent of Bartlemy Fair, of "droll," that was played by village actors in their neighbours' kitchens or barns. This, whatever its shortcomings, had at least the merit of being built from the materials at hand, for if the one surviving specimen is to be taken as typical, not only was its plot taken from a local folk-tale, but its dialogue was full of folk-speech, and into it was thrown as much of folk-humour, folk-song, and folk-dance as it could conveniently bear. It was thus infinitely more local than the St. George play or, apart from their Celtic language, the old Miracle plays, and as a genuine folk-drama

seemed an excellent foundation upon which to raise a new series of Cornish village plays.

With this idea it was that, after seeing the children of Nancledrea getting what they could out of the conventional action-song and duologue "for the use of schools," and feeling it a pity that they should be set to acquire such banalities when they had so charming and expressive a mode of speech of their own, I thought to restore the fragments of this old Cornish Droll, "Duffy and the Devil," and fit it for modern presentation, so giving them something in which for once they might easily excel the rest of the world—a play that should be entirely their own. The old material proving too intractable, I found myself in the end with an entirely new "Duffy," one in which the story, though still traditional, ran a little more sweetly, and in which even more of local lore of all sorts was interwoven. It was still, however, a Cornish droll, neither tragedy, comedy, ballad-opera, nor farce, but a little of all; and with all its technical oddities and archaisms somehow capable of coming to life on the stage and of pleasing not only village audiences, but even now and then a chance visitor, who, knowing better the boards of the city theatre, was not above enjoying something characteristic, even when delivered in an unfamiliar dialect on the village platform's "planching."

The Cornish droll seeming to have justified itself, several plays dealing on similar lines with other local traditions, all growing with their actors' growth, and shaping themselves under many rehearsals, came into being, until we had a repertoire of over a half-dozen plays, more or less, with which after amusing our near neighbours we found ourselves in request for "feastentide" entertainments in villages round about, and were gradually working towards bigger things when removals from the village, our own included, came to break up the company, and then the war to make its reassembly impossible.

This year a new company was got together to perform a Cornish droll as appropriate to the celebration of the centenary of the Penzance Library, which numbers amongst its features not only a strong Cornish section, but also

## VILLAGE PLAYS IN WEST CORNWALL

the gift of the Shakesperean, J. O. Halliwell, a fine collection of old dramatic literature. This performance showed that our village plays might prove equally amusing to the audiences of Cornish towns, and others at St. Ives and Helston have since followed. Besides spreading the cult of the village play, and especially of the Cornish droll, these have brought to us many expressions of interest and good-will, and backed up as we now know ourselves to be by the sympathy of a Drama League, we feel the prospects of the village play in West Cornwall to be fairly assured.

The work that these plays of mine are meant for is largely that of arousing our countryside through familiarity with its past to a more lively interest in its future; they naturally, therefore, with their old-fashioned speech, manners, and costumes, tend to run towards old-fashioned stage conventions. A musical intonation carried over from our old Celtic language, makes of the whole play a sort of opera, in which it is hardly surprising that there should be little streaks of verse or song. In a tiny hall, prologue and epilogue, and even an occasional garrulous bit of narrative, do not seem to come amiss. The setting, apart from a few pieces of old furniture, is of the simplest, a white sheet or a "tapestry" (the latter painted on sackcloth) at once turning the stage into a whitewashed cottage kitchen or a sumptuously furnished hall; outdoor scenes we have hitherto avoided. Written for platforms a little bigger than a kitchen table, the limit of possible characters is soon reached, even where it is not fixed by

that of possible actors, and being at close quarters with the audience we use neither footlights nor make-up. With such simple means, however, we have been able to restore something of the old world of romance to many who have hitherto been missing it, and in many ways it has all been well worth while.

In future we expect to have many village plays of many kinds. We have already seen what can be done with fairy plays and other productions by local writers other than myself. One of the most interesting of these was certainly the performance last winter by the "Ventonleague Primitive Methodist Dramatic Society" of a home-made "sacred drama," "Esther." This, the spontaneous effort of a village congregation, none of whom had probably ever been inside a theatre, or would perhaps even dream of visiting one, was acted in an utterly unsophisticated way, reverently because of its sacred theme, but with little gleams of inevitable humour, that brought its hearers nearer to the spirit of the ancient Miracle play than the most skilful revival of the old plays themselves could do. Possibly the dramatic genius of the people of Cornwall may make something of such things again; but whatever village acting in the Land's End district may become, for its pioneer spade-work we seem to have found in the antiquated Cornish droll a tool that suits the local mind as well as the old-style long-handled shovel suits the local soil, and its usefulness may be expected to keep it in existence, if not as long as the Celtic shovel, still for many years to come.

# MORRIS DANCING AT HASCOMBE

By Basil Creighton

A VISITOR to Hascombe Place, near Godalming, on Bank Holiday, if he came from the outer world, felt that he was merely a bewitched and superfluous onlooker, and not as the rest of the gathering was, a necessary part of the occasion. For between the dancers and those who watched them there was the tie of neighbourhood and acquaintanceship rather than of performers and spectators, and when the occasion offered both parties mingled and took their places in the dance. If they were divided at all it was by the lapse of time, by living in an age when merrymaking has slipped away so far from the patronage of the masses. But on this occasion the spell was so strong that the sense of past and present were almost one. No efforts of appreciation or tolerance or understanding were needed on the part of those who looked on at a revival of ancient pleasures, and those who danced seemed to take for granted that their performance was as pleasing to others as to themselves. For one day at least, a half-forgotten chord was struck in the hearts of the whole gathering, and while they talked and laughed and applauded nieces and daughters and cousins they shed two or three centuries without noticing.

Everything helped them to do it—the walled garden, the lawn, the borders, the fine old house standing in a hollow with the bracken creeping out from the edges of the wood.

As for the dancing, the songs, and the children's games, they do not need to come up for judgment as expositions of skill and finish. You do not look to find in the fifty or sixty volunteers of a scattered countryside connoisseurship and cultured enthusiasm. They were not exponents of Morris dancing. They were something more like Morris dancers. In fact, though they could not quite be what they most nearly were, the simple merry-makers of old village life, they would not be what happily they could not suggest, the well-rehearsed and consciously correct imitation. From this spark of reality, æsthetic without æstheticism, sprang the bewitching concord between them and the onlookers, that something which swung the whole scene not only back into the past, but almost forward again into a nicer though not quite certain present. It would not

have been the same if they had been compelling admiration from spectators, who were nothing else. The remarks were, not "Why don't they show in town," but "That's Polly in green just taking hands with my wife," and rather enviously, "Dashed if it isn't more than I could do as a lad."

But still, though this was the spirit of the day, and the jolly tea in the park afterwards a part of it all, the dancing and singing are remembered for themselves. In many cases the native charm and spirit of the performances put them beyond comparison. The children's voices were sweet and unstrained and natural, and their enunciation clear and pleasing, and the dancing of the youths was remarkable for its solemn and unstudied modesty. In fact the gravity, the bent head, and the comely lack of personal feeling which were noticeable in one or more of them made up one of the most wonderful features of the occasion. Very rarely was there any sign that they felt more graceful or "artistic" than usual. This mood almost of diffidence was well united to those later dances such as "Faithful Shepherd," which evolved slowly from a circle through movements in two ranks to the circle again. And in this case the æsthetic effect was extremely clear and moving. There was more assurance and certainty in the dances than in the combination of action and song. Bean setting and Shepherd's Hey, where there was dancing and action without singing, were delightfully done. And of the songs, "Seventeen come Sunday," a tune in a Gregorian mode, was more kindly taken to than the more romantic "Gipsies" or "Mowing the Barley," though these, so delightful in themselves, gave quite as much or perhaps more pleasure. But if comparisons were to be made the singing games played by the small children, two and two in the purest spirit of fun, would come in for a high place. "When I was a young girl" drew tears for its artless comedy, as well as laughter. "Here we come up the green grass" and "Looby Loo," and indeed all the games clearly delighted everybody.

Fortunate are the children nowadays who are given such tunes to whistle, and who can look forward as the years go on to joining more and more in such entertainment.



# THE LAST TWO MONTHS

By Frank Swinnerton

*We here continue our bi-monthly Causerie on the London Stage, thus giving an opportunity for eminent dramatic critics of various schools of thought to express their natural and unrestrained opinions on the more important theatrical productions of the period under review. Mr. William Archer initiated this feature of the magazine in our first number. In succeeding numbers we have arranged for the Causerie to be continued by Mr. E. A. Baughan, Mr. Gilbert Cannan, and Mr. W. J. Turner*

ASSUMING that one wishes the contemporary drama to be a live organism, it is not to be denied that the best thing to say about the last two months in the theatre would be exactly nothing at all. Plays have been produced in some quantity; but no plays have been seen which could be supposed to have any but the most distant relation to real drama. All have been "practicable" pieces for the theatre, sometimes exhibiting great ingenuity, sometimes offering themselves merely as feeble butts for the ridicule of amiable critics; but all have been alike in their absorbed concern with what is effective in the theatre. They have all, that is to say, been founded upon stunts.

To take an example. The ordinary set play—the play in which a man or a woman loves somebody with whom reputable union is difficult or impossible—is a little outmoded. Love for illegitimate objects has become during the war such a commonplace that to depict its manifestations would be to embrace the much abhorred thing, naturalism. That would never do. And yet love, legitimate or illegitimate, is so inevitable in the theatre that to do without it (love being the only emotional interest recognised in the theatre, and in fact by the majority of human beings) is an impossibility. Our dramatists are therefore confused in their search for material. They look round amazedly. Everywhere, at the end of each vista, they see that a small and extraordinarily talented Scotsman has staked a claim. Every novelty is thus denied them. They must either cease from writing—a thing which no professional writer will do unless he is paralysed—or run their work into a mould already used and used again and cracked with much employment. Such English writers as Mr. Maugham (seriously in "Caesar's Wife" and humorously in "Home and Beauty"), and Mr. Robert Hichens in "The Voice from the Minaret," shaking their heads at the apparition, have

plunged back into the horrors of sex relations. Having shown a young wife struggling with her inclinations in "Caesar's Wife," Mr. Maugham has in "Home and Beauty" shown a young wife following her inclinations unchecked even to the third husband, with no limit set to her capacity for turning men to account. Mr. Hichens skirmishes with a "problem," and shows a young wife unfaithful to a faithless husband, and a young man of religious vocation sharing in her moral enormities. In the case of neither Mr. Maugham nor Mr. Hichens (although their methods are distinct) is there any attempt to do more than tell again an oft-told tale of moral conflict. They are content to accept the mould, the convention; and to them sexual love is the sole interest of the theatre.

But the Americans are more expert in the handling of stunts than are the English dramatists. They have examined the field. They have taken cognizance of Sir James Barrie. And they are not afraid. Love there must be, as they well see; but there is to them a whole series of practicable loves for the theatre. There is mother love (illustrated in "Trimmed in Scarlet"), fairy godmother love ("The Cinderella Man"), love of one's relations ("Too Many Cooks"), love of adoptive fathers ("Daddies"), love of quarrelling friends of the same sex ("Business Before Pleasure" and "Uncle Sam"), and so on. These loves offer dramatic material for wringing laughter and tears from all sorts of soft hearts. It is not the "story" that matters, for the stories of all these plays are extremely slight, so that they would hardly be material for a magazine tale apiece. It is love that matters. Moreover, the peculiar efficiency of the American mind enables the authors of the plays to go to great sentimental lengths without quite stepping over into intolerable stickiness. That is their achievement. London is flocking at the moment to a large number of plays in



## THE LAST TWO MONTHS

which the loves subsidiary to the love of sex are being cunningly exploited by dramatists who understand the theatre and can manage its paraphernalia. These plays are competent, and they are all directed to the collective sentimentality of audiences which desire always to laugh and cry all through the evening, and chatter in the intervals, and come away from the theatre tremendously reassured about the goodness and beauty of human nature.

This power to give reassurance about human nature is the key to success in the theatre. Where grim people present life as endless and insoluble struggle, the competent sentimental dramatist shows that we are not really at all unpleasant as a species. Far from it. Each of us at the core is sound. Only the externals are sometimes rough and misleading. Even the grim father in "The Cinderella Man" relents. Even the stern bachelors in "Daddies" relent and become instinctively paternal. The lurid heroine of "Trimmed in Scarlet" is in reality pure and "nice." The course of true love, although hindered by prejudice, at last runs smooth in an English sentimental play, "Tilly of Bloomsbury," simply because young love and innocence are so powerful a combination that they finally conquer every heart. Nothing can check the tide of goodwill, nothing can keep the leaven of love from triumphing before the final curtain. It is all beautiful and beautifully simple. And it helps in this daily life of stodge and hackwork the sentimentalist hitherto aghast at the horrors revealed by his own introspection and the disappointments incidental to his own groping life of emotion. It shows him that everything still comes right in the end.

But the sentimental play is in reality only an anodyne, and as such it has the viciousness

of all anodynes. It supplies a needed stimulant, but it also prepares the way for other, and innumerable, sentimental plays, because the next time we are in the dumps we fly once again to the particular anodyne which has served in the past. The sentimental play seems to me thus inevitable because it is a response to a perennial demand. It takes people away from what they call the sordid realities of life. It takes them away, that is, from the boredom produced by their own resourceless natures.

One thing may be noted. The sentimental plays which we have recently seen are very well acted. "The Cinderella Man," "Tilly of Bloomsbury," "Daddies," all are distinguished by easy, natural, delightful acting. The acting, by being keyed low, makes the outrageous *vox humana* less vibrant and horrible. It makes the sentimental play a colourable imitation of life. It increases its insidious hold upon our weak natures. Presumably those who have the interests of the drama at heart do not desire to perpetuate the sentimental play. Their motto, generally, is "*Ecrasez l'infame!*" That is why they must hate to hear about the sentimental play and its success. I apologise for writing about it at such length. There are no other new plays. London is full of charming sentimentality. It is bathing in it. How pleasant, but how devitalising! How excellent that such an organisation as the British Drama League should have been founded to redeem and remodel the English stage! Its task is heavy—how heavy only those can understand who have been made by circumstance to attend the premières of the last two months. But if it checks this strangulation of the drama the League will perform an historic act, and one of incalculable value to the cause of civilising the savage sentimentalist.

# A BOOK ON MODERN PAGEANTRY

Reviewed by Albert Rutherford

LET IT BE SAID at once that we have disliked always the word "pageant." Our prejudices are apt to die hard, and precisely as at ordinary times, on ordinary occasions, we find it difficult to take to our hearts the unwelcome guest or to feel spirited and jovial with those who weary us, so our aesthetic inclinations or instincts are, we may take it, similarly inclined.

A long tradition of badly presented and tedious ceremony, such as in these days we have learned to associate with those processions and public displays we are offered at moments of national or civic rejoicing, has taught those of us who may be sensitive to what should be the beauty and significance of these occasions, that they are not only to be avoided, but, indeed, to be dreaded.

We are, in this respect, at one with Mr. R. Anning Bell and Mr. T. L. Horabin who, in the short preface in which they introduce the subject matter of their joint committee's deliberations on pageantry and street decoration,\* state very truly that "the need for a nobler and more artistic form of public ceremony is generally accepted."

The deliberations of this committee, published under the title of "Rejoice Greatly," are presented to us in a pleasantly printed book, in whose pages are set down the views of various experts and advisers in the matter of decoration, pageantry, heraldry, song, and dance.

The occasion which gave rise to the voicing of these views was, apparently, the prospect of the Naval and Mercantile Marine Pageant, which was subsequently held on the river Thames on the 4th of August in this year. The League of Arts for National and Civic Ceremonies, co-operating with the British Institute of Industrial Art, formed the committee referred to above, in the hope that a worthy scheme of decoration, suited to the dignity of the occasion, might be evolved and introduced.

\* "Rejoice Greatly: How to Organise Public Ceremonies." Edited by T. L. Horabin for the Decorations Committee formed by the League of Arts for National and Civic Ceremonies, in conjunction with the British Institute of Industrial Art. Produced by the Sun Engraving Company, Limited. 10s. 6d. net.

With the motive that inspired this hope we have every sympathy, but on careful examination of the views expressed in "Rejoice Greatly" we feel that they lead us nowhere, and they strike us as being a typical result in this respect of the danger of the "committee" system.

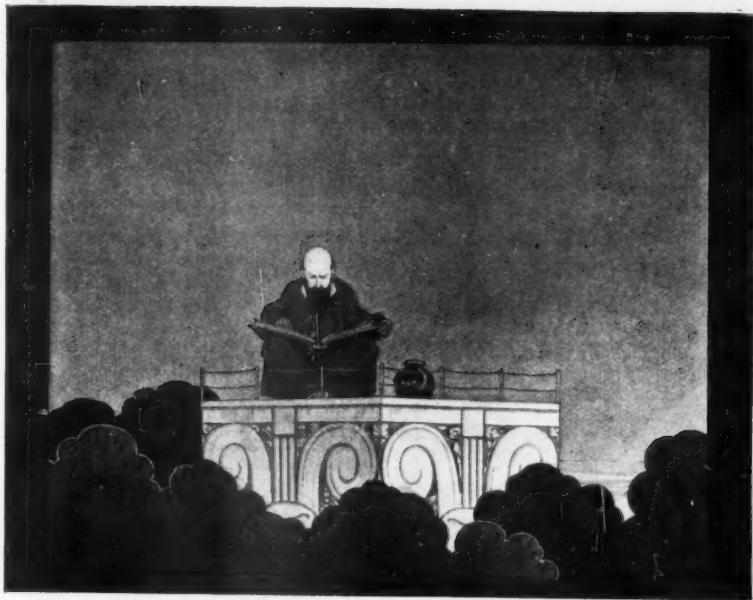
Various methods which might be employed in the organisation of pageant or procession are set down, technical details for the production of each branch of the several crafts essential to these are hinted at, whilst an attempt at some constructive policy is aimed at.

All this, indeed, is admirable, but judged in the light of expectancy for a finished result as a whole, we find we are being given a series of detailed views only; simply a number of opinions expressed by different individuals; we do not feel that any definite conclusion was arrived at or that any real inspiration is shown.

In certain instances the statements as to what should or should not be done contradict each other badly, and there is small evidence of any really spirited or creative leadership.

The most passionate appeal is made by Mr. Henry Wilson, who expresses certain ideas which are both true and noble. We cannot, however, agree with him that the energies and services of all living artists, historians, poets, writers, and musicians should be enlisted in the preparation of a yearly peace pageant as for a sort of standing dish. This is too much. One really inspired mind would probably be quite sufficient. Mr. Wilson further suggests that "every school should be turned into a school of creative expression." We agree, not because of a yearly peace pageant or any similar fête, but rather in spite of them. We cannot at heart take pageantry so seriously as Mr. Wilson would appear to do, nor regard it as a really important form of national artistic expression.

Pageantry, processions, ceremony are reflections, and must be of the particular age in which they are born and to which they belong. They are, after all, a kind of "fireworks," and whether good, bad or indifferent they must at least grow up without conscious effort. We would draw attention to the



Stage Setting by WILLIAM GRIMMOND for "St. Simeon Stylites" by F. Sladen-Smith, produced by the UNNAMED SOCIETY, Manchester, March 25th, 1919

The play is a fantasy based on the life of the first of the Pillar Saints, and the entire action takes place on the top of St. Simeon's column near Antioch. In the scene, the effect of height was suggested by showing the capital of the column rising out of the tops of the trees

## A BOOK ON MODERN PAGEANTRY

extraordinary beauty of the Peace procession held on the 19th of July, as illustrating what we mean by the use of the word "unconscious." Some artists there are undoubtedly, to whom the call of pageantry, street decorating—what you will—is an inspiration to which their particular temperaments respond. It is these artists and these only to whom should be left the task of evolving such productions when the call for them arises.

In art, tradition is perhaps a dangerous thing, at best it is dead material. Traditional things may be and are reproduced; up to a certain point they may be satisfying—like the Lord Mayor's coach and coachman—but beyond a pleasing interest or a tickling of curiosity they strike no further note and have no deeper significance.

Real inspiration can exist only where it draws on a living fount of life. It seems to us that Sir Frank Benson hits nearer the truth when, in answer to his own query as to "what is a pageant?" he states that, among other things, "it can be used to make an appeal for some special service, the Lifeboat Fund, recruiting, and the like." This is the proper spirit, indeed it is the emphasising of such occasions in a fine and noble manner which justifies procession or pageant. We do not wish for a moment to

suggest that we are not in sympathy with the admirable intention which led to the formation of the joint committee; it is the apparent result of the committee's conclusions as voiced in "Rejoice Greatly" with which we cannot feel enthusiasm, nor do we think that the elaborate methods suggested by Major A. A. Longden for a semi-military organisation, applied to a form of decoration employing so many details of arts and crafts, would help matters.

In all artistic effort it is a quality of direct inspiration which must be the keystone both for its justification and success. Where inspiration is, the machinery for its mobilisation will appear automatically.

The book is copiously illustrated, but we find little comfort from the ideas of decoration these examples set out to suggest—the designs seem confused and lifeless, embodying no living or contemporary sense, they strike us as lacking invention, heavily trapped with the pickings of museum or manuscript.

Rather than any of these we would prefer to leave things as they stand, ugly no doubt, and bad, but they stand at least the confession of an ugly age, which may or may not work out its own salvation. A true reflection at least, not a conscious and quite meaningless fumbling between two stools.

# ECHO FROM THE CONFERENCE

## THE BISHOP OF BIRMINGHAM.

**W**E ARE ON the threshold of a new era which will stimulate all that is romantic in our natures. Life is better understood, and its portrayal will be more interesting and more difficult. So your society may have a great future. Beware of narrowness which cramps originality, pedantry which crushes individuality, and of the merely critical or superior air. In the course of a long life, and a life which must have its ups and downs, I have found no such recreation as I have in the theatre, and therefore I want to thank the actors and actresses for what they have done. With all my heart I wish God-speed to the drama of the future.

## MR. WILLIAM ARCHER.

The British drama of to-day can quite well hold its own with the drama of any other country. But all its best work has been done outside the long-run theatres, and it is only by providing for the openings for escape from a vicious and vulgarising system that we can hope to carry forward the wonderful movement from the past twenty years, and fully to develop the dramatic genius of our race. On every hand we see the stirring of a great revival; but it is everywhere checked by paralysing material influences. Under such conditions sound art cannot possibly flourish; and the Drama League, I take it, exists to combat such conditions. Matthew Arnold, forty years ago, spoke a word of wisdom which we have not yet taken to heart, "The drama is irresistible," he said; "organise the theatre."

## MISS ELLEN TERRY'S MESSAGE.

The drama, we should never forget, is the child of the theatre. It goes to my heart that the child should be brought up to despise its parent. It seems to me that we talk too much about the reform of the theatre and too little about the reform of audiences, and the creation of more and more audiences until you have a whole people running theatres for themselves. For this reason I am especially in sympathy with the objects one and nine on the Drama

League prospectus. If these are sought in the right way I believe that all the rest will be added unto you.

## MR. H. C. LACEY.

Don't get into the habit of misunderstanding our democracy. They may be asking for shorter hours, for higher wages; they may be right, they may be wrong; but what they do want is a far bigger realisation of the good things of life. You have easy ground to plough, suitable fields to break up, but if you do not do this for the people you must expect them to break things, like the kiddies do. Appeal to their artistic and æsthetic side, and I am sure you will have the masses of the country behind you.

## MR. BEN GREET.

I am old-fashioned enough to believe that what playgoers need is careful organisation and guidance rather than a system of militarism and Bolshevism, and I feel that the Drama League has been formed to help this end. We have as our subject (Shakespeare) the man who was the greatest of realists; a dramatist who was at once judge, priest, player, spiritualist, philosopher, friend, and re-creator; one who had reached the height and depth of every fibre of humanity, combining with these great gifts that of being the greatest commercial theatre-man and manager of his time, and who finished with a nice bank account to his credit and a lovely week-end residence at Stratford. Let it always be remembered that the actual play is what the author wants.

## MR. GRANVILLE BARKER.

As far as I know the Drama League has no patent wares to sell, no individual axe to grind. It aspires to be a clearing-house for ideas, and a centre for mutual assistance. Individual membership is necessary, but more important is the membership which represents institutions, bodies of people. We must consider the theatre and the drama as an integral part of our social structure, and we must not ask young men and women to give their lives to it unless we are prepared to look at it from that point of view. We do not want young

## ECHO FROM THE CONFERENCE

men coming into the theatre because they have failed in other professions, or young ladies because they were a little restless at home. We want people who will deliberately choose the theatre as an honourable calling, training themselves for it and devoting the best years of their life to it.

### VISCOUNT BURNHAM.

It has now to be considered whether the training given in this country and the opportunities for training are adequate, and how far the French principle of State patronage and State inspection should be adopted. Much has been done by such a school as that founded twenty-five years ago by Sir H. Beerbohm Tree. I have heard various opinions as to the work done by that school. But, on the whole, I am bound to say that everything that has come to pass has justified its institution, and it has supplied many recruits of promise and some of achievement to the English stage.

### M. DE MARATRAY

(Representing M. Fernand Bourgeret, Secrétaire du Conservatoire de Musique et de Déclamation, Paris).

M. de Maratray, who spoke in French, said that theatrical tradition in France was of a permanent character, whereas in England it was of a temporary one. The Conservatoire was not inimical to individual temperaments. Its rules might be of a conservative nature, but one might almost forget them in the course of one's career. The foundation of the Conservatoire dated back to 1795. It comprised classes of music and declamation, subdivided into various sections. M. de Maratray felt certain that the influence of Shakespeare on actors performing his characters could not but be an uplifting one, and he urged them to have a National Institution where their glorious theatrical traditions might flourish. There was also a great need of a mutual exchange of French and English artists in order to facilitate a better and more thorough understanding of our national aspirations.

### MR. BRIDGES ADAMS.

Knowing several commercial managers, I doubt very much whether they are so bad as they are painted, and I think the majority of

them came into the business animated by very much the same ideals as are held by the Drama League. I wish the Drama League all luck, and more power to their elbow. May they succeed in forming a new and virile generation of producers and actors, afraid of nothing, and also cultivate a public taste capable of supporting and backing it!

### MISS ELSIE FOGERTY.

A university Collège of the Theatre should have the co-operation of all those who are really interested in the theatre, and it should contain every form of activity that concerns the theatre. All the great players of the day should help in the production of plays, of the management of the students, and their training in the principles of their art. They should have a workshop for all forms of experiment in relation to production in the theatre, and artists would be able to say many things which it was impossible to say in the commercial theatres. Modern psychological knowledge shows that the lack of training in the spoken tongue and the rhythmic movements which are necessary to a full expression and study of the drama is a great gap in our national training. It is to fill that gap that I urge the establishment of the university.

### MISS EDITH CRAIG.

As to reform in production, I favour progress, transformation, any word of that sort, but not reform. Reforms have been going on for a good many years, although some people seem to think they are only just beginning. Sir Henry Irving was a great reformer in his day, and I can remember Miss Helen Faucit being carried out in an almost fainting condition at the reforms he introduced.

### MR. NORMAN WILKINSON.

I feel strongly with Miss Craig. There is no such thing as reform. I would put an extra accent on the *re*, and that is the point of the whole thing. We are not going to make things so much better, because the world is the same dear place that it has always been. The young revive and revitalise something already there, as Shakespeare's sonnet said: "Thou art thy mother's glass, and she in thee Renews the lovely April of her prime."



## ECHO FROM THE CONFERENCE

### MR. NORMAN MACDERMOTT.

The finished production of a play should be a completed work of art, with spiritual unity, rhythmic quality, style, call it what you will, just as an easel picture has. The fact that the artist of the theatre works on human material, as well as on inanimate objects, only complicates and makes more difficult his work, and does not alter the truth of my contention. The really wise producer would always be ready to accept suggestions from or discuss them with his players. But creative quality must come largely from the producer, and this is as it should be, for he is the re-interpreter of the author in terms of the theatre, the great composite art.

### THE REV. ARNOLD PINCHARD.

The reason the Birmingham Repertory Theatre has survived the war is that the work there was not an exotic or a foreign importation, but arose out of the dramatic and artistic life of the city itself. The movement has progressed even through the war. If one takes the figure 101 as representing the regular attendance at the Birmingham Theatre when war broke out in 1914, in 1915-1916 it was 103, in 1916-1917 it was 106. In 1917-1918 the figure leapt up to 161, and in 1918-1919 to 190.

### MR. LEWIS CASSON.

If the repertory theatre is to go on a system must be devised which gives the power of cutting losses on plays which have no great attraction for the public, and the making of a steady income out of plays which were popular successes. We must endeavour to keep a play in the bill as long as possible without giving more than one performance consecutively.

### MISS VIOLA TREE.

There is an outcry for more and better music in the theatre. It certainly ought to occupy a more important place in the theatre than it does. Music should give colour and expression to the surroundings of a play; there should be greater unity in dramatic art.

### MR. EDWARD DENT.

We are out for new adventures and experiments in the theatre. We want to break away,

not from the really old traditions, but from what people think are the old traditions which go back to 1840 or 1860, traditions which the oldest inhabitant can just remember. Music is a thing which we create out of our own bodies, and in Shakespeare's time this country was the most musical in Europe.

### MR. CECIL SHARPE.

I regard music between the acts, such as we get at any rate, as a gratuitous insult. Suppose a man wishes to write a play about the Shakespeare-Bacon affair, is the music to be music in existence three centuries ago, or new music, and, if new, is it to be frankly of to-day or an imitation of the music of 1600?

### MR. W. S. KENNEDY.

I have no sympathy with those who say that the paying public of the West End would have the highest form of drama if and when they could get it, and that the manager has only to put on plays of the highest artistic merit. Some managers have tried it, but they have not as a rule disclosed the box-office returns.

### MISS HORNIMAN.

The ideal theatre would have over the doors the words: "In this theatre the dramatist is top dog." As to repertory theatres, they have my blessing. I know nothing about them. I was in management before the word came into the language. As to religious plays, how are they going to get past the Censor? The only reason why the Censor objects is, so far as I can see, that there might be a little jealousy on the part of the churches if the sacred words were spoken in the theatres so that the public could hear them.

### MR. ATHOLE STEWART.

The foundation of an Actors' Union Theatre, if properly organised, would gain undoubtedly a large measure of support from the public, which would view with sympathy an undertaking directed solely by those who, having at heart the interests of the drama in all its aspects, would confine the commercial side to its proper sphere in the venture.

## ECHO FROM THE CONFERENCE

### SIR ISRAEL GOLLANCZ.

Here you have an actual example of what can be done by theatrical endowment. The company presided over by Mr. Bridges Adams, and supported by the London Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, has followed a long series of efforts by that most excellent friend of everybody in this room, Sir Frank Benson. All honour is due to him and the gratitude of everyone who cares for Shakespeare. But one thing is quite certain—work is not better for being done against overwhelming odds.

### MR. ALEXANDER BASHKY.

The reason the problem play is unpopular is not that it is a low form of play, but that it entails thinking, which is supposed to be the exclusive presence of the "high brow." If you think the "high brow" is a mere fraud, I cannot agree with you. The name does not matter. What does matter is that the theatre should be a force in the life of the nation.

### MR. ALFRED LUGG.

A great hardship for the actor has been brought about by the introduction of the two-shows-a-night system, the manager, while doubling his receipts, paying the actor his ordinary salary for a single performance lasting a whole evening. This grievance has been amicably redressed by the action of the Actors' Association. Managers also have consented to provide the artists with all clothing bar boots.

### MR. ERNEST RHYS.

The Little Theatre is adaptable—pliable, and can be used for all sorts of performances, comedy or farce, even "movies," or the symbolist play of the most attenuated kind. Given a form of art not too costly or unwieldy in form, the people would respond to it. Big or little, a theatre was a mirror of human nature.

### MISS GWEN RICHARDSON.

(Representing the "Old Vic.")

As for the endowed theatre, let no mistake be made about this—that when once the public as a whole had been "educated" (that is, made aware of and accustomed to see the beauty of our great dramatic masterpieces and to find satisfying entertainment in them), there will be no more need for endowment.

### MR. GEOFFREY WHITWORTH.

To my mind the artist, and not least the artist of the theatre, whether playwright, actor, scene-painter, or producer, is a man or woman who retains the acute perception of a child, and is able to express it with the intelligence and power of maturity, and by so doing he reveals the truth. And the truth he reveals is the humour, the beauty, and the tragedy which we grow too dull to envisage for ourselves without the magic of art.

## EXHIBITION OF STAGE MODELS AND DESIGNS

AN exhibition of stage models and designs for scenery and costumes, together with some actual costumes that have been used in recent well-known Shakespearean productions, was organised by Miss Edith Craig, Mr. Norman Wilkinson, and Mr. Norman Macdermott, and held at Trinity College during the Stratford Conference. The object of the exhibition was to test the practical side of the artist's work in the theatre, and to show how an artist designs scenery and costumes, and all that goes to make up what one sees in the finished production in the theatre, apart from the actors and their acting. The majority of models and designs had been made for actual

productions in London and elsewhere, and the public could therefore see behind the scenes and study the methods that our modern designers for the theatre use in their work. Actual dresses of historic interest were shown—Miss Ellen Terry's dress that she wore in the part of Ophelia, Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson's Hamlet dress, and others that Mr. Rutherford and Mr. Wilkinson designed for Mr. Granville Barker's Shakespearean productions at the Savoy Theatre. Together with these, a very comprehensive series of stage models and designs made an attractive and practical demonstration of the artist's work in the theatre of to-day.

# DRAMA LEAGUE CHRONICLE

## AFFILIATIONS.

ONE of the principal objects of the League, as our members know, is to form Dramatic Groups, and also "to establish relations with other Bodies at present working with similar objects." We are therefore pleased to announce that the following organisations have already joined. They are given in alphabetical order, together with the addresses of their secretaries, as many readers will no doubt like to get into touch with any Society that may happen to be in their own locality:

ASHBURTON GROUP—Seymour Marks, Esq., 65, Hosack Road, Upper Tooting, London, S.W. 17.

BOURNVILLE DRAMATIC SOCIETY—The Secretary, care of Cadbury Bros., Ltd., Bournville, Birmingham.

DUNSFOLD DRAMATIC SOCIETY—Mrs. E. L. Hollins, Dunsfold, Surrey.

GLASTONBURY FESTIVAL SCHOOL—Rutland Boughton, Esq., Glastonbury.

HARPUR STREET W. E. A. DRAMATIC GROUP—A. E. Parker, Esq., 16, Harpur Street, Holborn, London.

LONGSIGHT DRAMATIC GROUP—Arthur Green, Esq., 12, Mayfield Road, Levenshulme, Manchester.

MERSTHAM DRAMATIC GROUP—Mrs. Stevens, Rookwood, Merstham, Surrey.

NEW EARSWICK DRAMATIC SOCIETY—Miss I. M. Mockett, The Red Lodge, New Earswick, York.

THE "OLD VIC." GROUP—Miss Lilian Baylis, The "Old Vic.," Waterloo Road, London, S.E.1.

THE PIONEER PLAYERS—Miss Christopher St. John, 31, Bedford Street, Strand, W.C.2.

STOCKPORT GARRICK SOCIETY—A. H. Page, Esq., 42, Kennerley Road, Davenport, Stockport.

STONELAND PLAYERS—Mrs. King, Stonelands, West Heathley, Sussex.

VILLAGE DRAMA SOCIETY—Miss Mary Kelly Kelly, Lifton, N. Devon.

## THE "OLD VIC."

THE "Old Vic." reopened on Saturday, 27th September, at 7.30 with Shakespeare's "Merry Wives of Windsor."

A thoroughly strong Shakespeare Company has been formed, and with Russell Thorndike and Charles Warburton acting jointly as producers, very interesting work may be expected.

There will be evening performances of Shakespeare's plays every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, opera in English on Thursday and Saturday evenings; Shakespeare matinees (for schools only) on Wednesdays at 2, and for the general public on Thursdays at 2.30; and alternate play and opera matinees every Saturday.

The alterations at the "Old Vic." constitute an ambitious effort to meet the requirements of the London County Council. Electric light and an up-to-date heating apparatus have been installed and the auditorium has been redecorated, although in general aspect it remains essentially as before. On the stage the scenery has been thoroughly overhauled, and the lighting re-arranged on modern lines.

The producers, while subordinating everything to the action of the play, are giving particular attention to details of costume, fights, procession, heraldry, etc. The scene which will represent the Tabard Inn is painted from a twelfth-century hostelry in which the Kentish bowmen celebrated the victory of Agincourt; the frescoes which decorate Ford's house in "The Merry Wives" are a variation on the theme of some frescoes once belonging to Lincoln's Inn; while the stone scenes for Macbeth's castle are taken from old castle ruins in the western Highlands.

## DUNSFOLD, SURREY.

"We formed our Amateur Dramatic Society four years ago," writes Mrs. Hollins, "starting with a small committee consisting of a president, secretary, and four members. Since then we have produced eight small plays—four for grown-ups and four for children.

"The president writes the plays according to the capabilities of the various performers, and the committee help with suggestions with regard to construction and production. Our first efforts were very stiff and self-conscious, but we are now so accustomed to dancing and acting that we take it all as a matter of course, with quite natural results.

"When we started our plays we arranged frocks of grey and gold, very simply

## DRAMA LEAGUE CHRONICLE

made, and these have been the foundation of all our colour schemes, so that although we add to our wardrobe every year, yet we are very careful to arrange colours which harmonise artistically with those we already have, and in this we economise expense.

"For our grown-up plays we use our own frocks, and curtains take the place of scenery. In the summer the plays are always out of doors, so no scenery is required. Everything in connection with our work is local, and so far our efforts have produced £500, which has been given to church, war, and social work, and is entirely due to the enterprise of our Amateur Dramatic Society; and we all agree that the writing of our own plays according to our talent, atmosphere, and environment is the secret of any success we may have achieved."

### GLASTONBURY.

THE Glastonbury Music Drama Festival came into being in 1913 as the outcome of the enthusiasm of Rutland Boughton and the late Reginald Buckley. Lapsing in 1916, the festival was revived in August last. Three cycles of four performances were given, including Boughton's "Immortal Hour" (surely equalled by few modern works for the stage) and "The Round Table"; Clarence Raybould's moving one-act play, "The Sumida River"; Shirley's masque, "Cupid and Death," edited by E. J. Dent, now played for the first time since 1659, and sundry dances.

The cramped conditions, the short time possible for rehearsal, and the general want of facility before and behind the curtain necessarily resulted in imperfections and uncertainties which one could have wished overcome, but the whole-hearted enthusiasm of Rutland Boughton, Christina Walshe (who was responsible for dresses and decoration) and all the players, singers, and assistants, both professional and amateur, made these seem of little account to even the most critical. Here, one felt, is the stuff that matters and the spirit in which alone it can be fostered. Here the theatre is a community working harmoniously together for the good of the whole; here are ideas conceived and courageously put into practice to the best of that community's ability. We can only hope that the appeal for a theatre will not be long in producing a fit house in which these ideas can expand.

## COMING EVENTS.

*October 16.*—At the Æolian Hall, New Bond Street, London, W.1, at 8.30 p.m. Miss Daisy Ashford has generously consented to give the first public reading of her famous novel, "The Young Visitors," written at the age of nine. Tickets, £1 1s., 10s. 6d., and 5s. (unreserved), may be obtained from the Æolian Hall or from the usual agents. The proceeds of the reading will be given to the funds of the League.

*October 17-23.*—At Caxton Hall, Westminster. Dramatic Demonstrations and Lectures organised by the Drama League in connection with the annual Exhibition of the Federation of Women's Institutes. Full particulars may be obtained from the Secretary, Federation of Women's Institutes, 72, Victoria Street, London, S.W.1.

*October 19.*—At Manchester. Mr. H. Granville Barker speaks at a meeting to inaugurate the British Drama League, called by the invitation of the Manchester Playgoers' Society.

*October 22.*—At Bath. Mrs. Penelope Wheeler on "The Drama of Yesterday and Tomorrow."

*November 1.*—Meeting at Reigate to explain the work of the Drama League to the officials of Surrey Women's Institutes.

*November 24.*—Mr. Granville Barker speaks at a meeting to inaugurate the Drama League in Birmingham, to be held at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre, by kind permission of Mr. John Drinkwater and Mr. Barry Jackson.

## THANKS.

TO MISS ELSIE FOGERTY for her memorable services as Hon. Secretary of the Stratford Conference.

TO the MAYOR OF STRATFORD and the Governors of the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre and of the Grammar School for their hospitality to the Conference meetings.

TO MISS MARIE CORELLI for lending Trinity House for the exhibition.

TO MR. NORMAN MACDERMOTT for dealing with so many problems in connection with the Exhibition, and acting as Hon. Secretary of the Exhibition Committee.

TO the PRESS for help in a hundred ways in making the League known far and wide.

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# THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE

has been established for the encouragement of the Art of the Theatre, both for its own sake and as a means of Intelligent Recreation among all classes of the community. Membership is open to all persons who are concerned with the practice or enjoyment of the Art of the Theatre, and may be acquired by the payment of the Annual Subscription of £1 is. This entitles the Member to all the privileges afforded by the League, including the receipt of the League's Magazine, "DRAMA." Associates may also join in groups of not less than ten persons, with a minimum subscription of £1 is., and is. extra for every Associate above the number of twenty. Full particulars as to the formation of affiliated groups may be obtained from the Hon. Secretary.

The League is desirous to get into touch with all persons or Societies at present working for the spread of Theatrical Art, and welcomes communications from all such persons, with offers of or requests for assistance. A Theatrical Bureau of Information is in course of formation at the Offices of the League.

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